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ABSTRACT

A synthesis of Polish research and research methodology (1965-75) re: leisure time and rural youth reveals methodological differences and research results with implications for the future of rural youth. In the order of their popularity, the major Polish research methods are: inquiry; the memorialist approach; a combination of inquiry and free statement; monographic research; and synthesis. Major methodological disparities involve standardization of definitions re: activities; age differentials; educational and socio-occupational groups. While most Polish researchers recognize the barriers to leisure time participation as incorporating psycho-social, cultural, temporal, spatial, and financial factors, they do not treat these factors equally. Despite the lack of standardized research procedures, research results on leisure time and rural youth indicate the following general trends: (1) the higher the educational level of rural youth, the greater the leisure aspiration; (2) cultural barriers are more persistent than spatial barriers; (3) cultural interest is most frequently expressed via TV and movie leisure time activities; (4) while accepted as a growing rural value, leisure is by no means universal due to poor and unevenly distributed facilities; (5) youth best capable of utilizing leisure are the better educated with non-agricultural jobs and the socio-politically oriented young farmers who are members of the Rural Youth Union. (JC)

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THEME:

# The Integrated Development of Human and Natural Resources: The Contribution of Rural Sociology

Seminar 15: Rural Youth: Human Resource or Human Burden?

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# RURAL YOUTH AND LEISURE

The paper forms an attempt of synthetizing partially the results of the researches on leisure time of rural youth, carried out in this country and described in the articles and books published in 1965-1975. The first part of the present dissertation deals with the methodological problems involved.

The question of the leisure habits of the rural youth in Poland has focussed, for a number of years past, the attention of scholars - above all of sociologists - probably on account of its being one of the elements of the rural life which have undergone particularly rapid changes in the last three decades. Yet, however, marked that interest it has not been reflected in an adequately large number of research and works on the subject. The reason seems to be the fact that the community of the rural youth is not easy to penetrate, for socio-cultural as well as organizational and regional considerations.

The investigations discussed by the author cover the period 1957-1974 and are highly differentiated from methodological point of view. The prevailing group among them make the ones carried out by way of enquiry, or enquiry combined with an interview, within different samples, the number of the respondents ranging from a few dozens to almost one thousand five-hundred. The second largest group are the memorialist materials. These base on the results of a few competitions addressed to the rural population and answered, to a large ex-

tent, or almost exclusively, by the rural youth because of their subject-matter /The Young Rural Generation of People's Poland, Two Starts, My First Steps in Farming, A Month with the Club/. A related group are the works based on intermediary materials oscillating between enquiry and a free statement of life-record type.

The following group make ~~makes~~ the works and dissertations whose authors availed themselves of statistical, information and documentary materials and duly analyzed them from the viewpoint of the subject of their research.

Monographic research on chosen rural communities was mainly performed by means of a combined method: that of enquiry and interview, use of various kinds of statistical documents and information and direct observation.

And, finally, the last group make the works bearing the character of syntheses based either on a few investigations by the same author or on various publications or dissertations on the same subject. Some of the empirical works also comprise attempts ~~of~~ at such syntheses, usually described in separate chapters.

When determining the notion of leisure the authors availed themselves of their own a priori adopted definitions, the basic elements of which referred to the definitions of Dumazedier and other theoreticians of the question /represented in Polish sociology i.a. by Jan Danecki, Aleksander Kamiński, Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński/ as well as of the so-called report-back definitions based on statements made by the respondents. In the first instance, the smallest number of disparities in the authors' opinions are recorded in recognizing as recreational those activities and behaviours which may be determined as

participation in culture, various forms of family and social life, sports and tourist activities or as passive participation in sports events. The differences appear, however, in the opinions on the character of extra-mural education, religious practices and social activities. Those three types of occupations may, though not necessarily, bear the character of the obligatory ones but in many instances are also likely to exercise clearly recreational functions. Manual labour done within the frameworks of a voluntary public undertaking is liable to be a relaxation for a white-collar worker; participation in a religious service an occasion of diverting from occupational duties, listening to music, etc. What claims attention, however, is the fact that scholars usually do not treat participation in social activity as a form of filling free time and only introduce affiliation with an organization into the group of independent variables as a social feature of the persons polled. And, on the contrary, the report-back definitions show notable diversification of opinions.

The young generation understands leisure as the time free from work and intended for active relaxation. The children - pupils of the eighth form - do not reckon as leisure the time allocated for active relaxation within the frameworks of occupations outside lesson hours but only the one intended for those organized by themselves within the peer groups, outside school.

As follows from the research discussed leisure - as conceived by the older age-groups of the rural population - usually means the opposite of work and necessity, not of all occupations in general but the principal and most urgent of them. Apart from the category of "leisure" there exists, above all, that of the most important occupations. And yet, the

young gereration employ the notion of working time conceived in a much broader sense and include in it also the short breaks made between the respective occupations and integrally connected with work. In that respect - says the author - the young people are much closer to the scientific definition of leisure.

As regards the method of gathering and arranging the materials concerned, the collection discussed is characterized by a great diversity. There are to be found therein separate studies the notional apparatus and instruments of which were specially selected for research purposes, without referring to the methodology of any other proceedings in this field.

Surprising differences are to be observed in selection of the age-groups of the persons polled. They range from those aged fourteen to thirty and it is difficult to find more than two authors adopting the same age limits. Notable differences are also characteristic of other social variables employed in classification of persons covered by the research. As regards, for example, classification of youth according to educational status, the scholars rather unanimously single out the group of persons having incomplete primary education that of the ones who completed primary school. But the more advanced the division, the more complex the situation. Post-primary education is usually divided into the basic vocational and secondary education. Some scholars single out the group of persons with incomplete secondary education, others treat the last three groups jointly.

What differs as well are the socio-occupational groups into which scholars class the persons subject to investigation. One of them, for example, differentiates but farmers and work-

ers, another farmers, agricultural labourers, manual workers employed in the country and - as a separate group - in town, and also two groups /urban and rural/ of white-collar workers and of pupils. And, in turn, some author - determining in greater detail various categories of the families embraced by the investigation divides them into those of ''pure'' farmers and the collective group of gainfully employed farmers with the subgroups of unskilled peasant-workers /part-time farmers/, skilled peasant-workers and agriculturists ranking among the intelligentsia.

Another problem - equally essential from the viewpoint of drawing conclusions on the modes of leisure habits of the rural youth and the way they influence the development of personality of the individuals concerned - is the fact that the studies on participation in culture /which make the bulk of the collection discussed/ pertain to the basic conditions of that participation and not to the latter as such. The point is the said works do not cover the matters of paramount importance to that problem and namely - those of the impact exerted by all those proceedings and behaviours which are included in the notion of leisure, upon moulding the personality of the individuals engaged in them. From that point of view it would be necessary then to establish, on the one hand, what substance is transmitted and, on the other, how it is received and what is its effect on the disposition of the receiver.

Under those conditions a sound, methodologically correct, generalization of the results attained by the numerous scholars remains extremely difficult. Nevertheless, the task is tempting all the more so as, not infrequently, they arrive at very close, or identical, conclusions. There would be no point in rejecting

all the results attained so far - and, on the whole, quite conspicious and valuable - for the mere reason of their being hard to synthetize, though this shortcoming is by no means negligible. The most appropriate proceeding consists in combining and comparing, above all, those works which base on similar methodological assumptions and give the grounds - depending on the method employed - for drawing conclusions of either quantitative or qualitative nature. This way of proceeding also gives the grounds for certain reflections of a general nature.

In order to put into effect a programme for recreation and leisure pursuits one has, first of all, to feel a conscious need for having free time at one's disposal and filling it with definite pursuits and, secondly, to be able to allocate from one's time budget the hours suitable for the purpose; thirdly, to have access to the facilities, objects and people enabling those pursuits and, fourthly, to command of adequate means for the purchase of definite goods and services. In other words, one has to surmount a few barriers barring access to participation in recreation and culture and, namely, the psycho-social /cultural/, temporal, spatial and the financial one. The consciousness of the existence of those barriers never fails the authors of the publications mentioned above, even if not formulated by them in a direct way. Nevertheless, those taking up the subject of the said barriers do not treat them on equal footing. What is relatively best elucidated is the problem of the place taken by leisure in the system of values and life aspirations of youth. The situation is some-what less satisfactory as regards the question of psycho-social conditionings of the attitudes toward definite forms of leisure.

The budget of the activities of daily living and the place taken therein by leisure is tackled but by some scholars and that in a rather marginal way. The only exception are the works dealing mainly with the problems of the work of farmers. Those pertaining to spatial barrier focuss the attention of an overwhelming majority of the authors of the works discussed and are taken into account in practially all those of empirical character. However, we learn actually nothing about the financial conditioning of participation in culture if the individual's budget taken into consideration. The matter of factual commanding by the rural youth in Poland of money for cultural and recreation purposes has so far not been the subject of any more systematic study. And nothing more is actually available in this regard than a vague information that the agricultural youth of today demand from their parents not only a certain amount of time free from work on the farm but, also, pocket money for their personal expenses.

It is difficult to ascertain what appeared first in the life of rural youth: the time actually free from obligatory occupations, i.e. leisure in the scientific sense of the word, the desire to command of that free time or participation in definite pursuits. For the point is that (the) whole knowledge of the subject, likely to be acquired, reveals the complex mutual interdependencies of those two aspects: of aspirations and their realization. Approaching the problem from chronological point of view, it seems justified to say that the aspirations were the first to appear and made an irruption into the rural life together with the socio-cultural revolution, which had began in this country after the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945, and rather quickly swept the Polish countryside at large. 9

None of the authors concerned entertains any doubts as to the fact that leisure is quite a new phenomenon in the life of peasant family. The older generation was of the opinion it did not befit a good farmer to have any time to spare. This would reflect discredit on his diligence and economy. Thus, we are faced here with negation of the very idea of leisure as a factor liable to disturb the feeling of self-complecency of the individual, as that in conflict with the principal values of that generation. And, in turn, in the attitudes of youth there is to be observed a tendency to single out, from the whole of the daily occupations, ~~of~~ a certain amount of time entirely free and intended for satisfaction of their individual aspirations and pursuits.

The causes of this state of affairs are seen by scholars to lie in the impact exerted by the whole of social transformations taking place in Poland, even if they have directly not affected as yet the given milieu but merely penetrated into the consciousness of youth by way of the latter's contacts with the members of their family or acquaintances who had already switched over onto a new system of organization or labour and also by the intermediary of the mass media, the school, etc. The rebellion of the rural youth, manifest in its steady drift from land to the cities is, in a large, and perhaps even a decisive, degree - a rebellion against shortage of leisure, against the severe restrictions and irregularities imposed by the rhythm of agricultural production. The effects of that rebellion are, of course, diversified, nevertheless there seems to be many an indication that the young people are going to win their struggle. The very older generation who have never had time for themselves and neither are eager to have it, not infrequently admit it is the young-

er one that is right.

Now whether that victory will be a lasting achievement, persisting throughout their lives is another matter. Suffice it to mention that in all the life-record collections discussed in the present paper evidence is found to the fact that leisure is largely a function of single state or, at least, of being childless. The point is that the moment the baby is born even the youngest woman looses her free time, and in a certain extent also the man whose family duties, even if conceived in a purely traditional way — but as providing for the family - as a rule increase as well .

Awakening of the aspiration to leisure as a value and passing the time barrier - even in so limited a way as in the case of rural youth - does by no means settle the problem of all the requirements which have to be met so as to be able factually to participate in leisure. There are still many factors of subjective, both psycho-social, material and cultural nature which decide whether the young people know how to benefit of the time free from work.

In the case of a general characteristics of the level of cultural activities in the rural areas, when the younger generation is treated as an internally uniform social group, it is beyond question the one more active in the sphere than the older part of the rural community. It is, above all, the young people who are the promotors of the new mass culture in the countryside. The greater part of the authors proceed further, however, and try to determine the internal differentiation of youth on account of its attitude toward the problems of leisure and participation in culture and also on account of the factors conclusive to that attitude. The results of the analyses carried out by them give the grounds for the following conclusions: 11

Firstly, what essentially helps the young people to pass the cultural barrier is their adoption of the patterns of labour and behaviour typical of a modern farmer whose occupational work has ever more features in common with that in other vocations and less with peasant mentality. At the same time, a conscious choice of the agricultural vocation makes one of the correlates of leadership in the socio-cultural life of the rural community.

Secondly, what is generally recognized as a factor significant in determination of the attitude of the younger generation to leisure and participation in culture is the level of education. The higher that level the more important place taken by leisure in the aspirations of the individual.

This is not a matter of course, however, if we ask what is the position as regards the correct style of leisure. True, it is generally understood that the new needs of man - also those pertaining to the sphere of culture, or to put it more broadly, of recreation, cannot appear without the given individual's realization of the existence of such needs withe other people and the modes of their satisfaction. From this point of view instruction at primary or secondary school may - and usually does - exercise the functions of stimulating and informative nature. School points to new needs and tries to inculcate the habits and modes of their satisfaction, not infrequently by coercive measures. Nevertheless, this is by no means a sufficient, though necessary, condition. The findings of quantitative research, above all, that on book and press reading in the rural areas /and not only there/ show that among the persons who completed primary or secondary school there are to be encountered some who have given up reading and do not participate in any forms of cultural activities /apart from society contacts/. On the other hand, there are to be found

as well many people who - in spite of their formally low level of education - show very strong aspirations to participation in culture and social activities. A characteristic instance in this respect are the young women who make the major part of rural club managers, appreciative of the significance of their cultural activities and though having mostly no more than primary education, effectively conducting the said activities with the assistance of social workers.

Another fact so far not called into question by any of the scholars referred to in the present paper is the specific role of the members and circles of the Rural Youth Union /RYU/ in organization of leisure and participation in culture. Wherever the Union's circles encountered by the scholars, a higher than the average level of the cultural work of the members of that organization has been ascertained by them. The preferences of youth as regards their leisure habits testify to a gradual elimination of spatial barriers and, at the same time, to persistance of the cultural ones. The information on the subject is comprised, above all, in the works based on quantitative investigations. The list of cultural interest of the younger generation is topped by TV watching and cinema going /of course according to the research carried out after the dynamic increase in number of TV subscribers in this country/. The other pursuits such as book and press reading and listening to the radio absorb the young people in more or less the same degree.

The conclusions of the authors of the respective works do not differ essentially from one another and show that, as regards press reading, the most popular are the illustrated magazines and from among radio programmes - the musical and entertainment shows followed by information:TV news, sports news/.

It seems worth adding in this connection that the scarce works which deal with the problem of simultaneous participation in various kinds of cultural pursuits reveal a cler-cut tendency to cumulation of the respondents' cultural pursuits, the technical and material conditions permiting.

A review of the literature dealing with the question of leisure time of the rural youth gives the grounds - in spite of all the reservations of methodological nature for a rough characteristics of the phenomena discussed. It is justified to state that while leisure has become a value generally recognized by the rural youth, its filling with cultural pursuits, entertainment of adequate standard and sports activities or tourism is by no means universal as yet on account of both, poor network of the facilities concerned, their uneven distribution and the still unmoulded cultural needs of a considerable part of that youth and its inability to satisfy them. The most dynamic in this respect are the groups of the better educated youth, with non-agricultural jobs, and the best educated and socio-politically oriented young farmers, as a rule, members of the ~~RYU~~ Rural Youth Union. And in turn, the worst position is that of majority of the young people working in agriculture, usually with the lowest level of education, having but little free time to spare, and much less active. The same applies to the group of the bi-occupational youth which usually has greater needs but in some cases no time at all to meet them. Now as regards cultural institutions operating in the rural areas the findings of relevant research seem to indicate it is the clubs that have exercised the functions stimulating most effectively the rise and growth of cultural aspirations and activities of the rural community. However, the modest and steadily shrinking range of their network seriously curbs the influence exerted by them. The school,

as a facility much commoner in the rural areas than the club, has so far not developed /apart from a few exceptions/ any wider cultural activities within the local milieu. A fixed and well established position is that of the rural libraries due to their rather dense network and efficient operation for many years past.